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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the 1972 presidential campaign of George McGovern embodied a rich Neo-Populist rhetorical vision that served as a framework for the candidate's campaign rhetoric. The thesis of the paper is that the Neo-Populist vision of McGovern included three particular fantasies, each of which dressed the McGovern persona as a Populist hero, included a plot line involving Populist motives, and visualized villains in the Populist vein. The paper examines the "Man of Principle" fantasy as an example of McGovern's Neo-Populist identity; the "New Politics" fantasy, which reveals the positions used by McGovern to project a Neo-Populist plot line; and the "Grass Roots" fantasy, which shows how the Neo-Populist rhetoric was used on the political stage. (Author/RL)

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THE NEO-POPULIST VISION OF AMERICA: A FANTASY THEME ANALYSIS OF GEORGE MC GOVERN'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

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During 1972 George S. McGovern unsuccessfully ran for President of the United States. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the McGovern campaign embodies a rich Neo-Populist rhetorical vision that served as a framework for the campaign rhetoric. The thesis of the paper argues that the Neo-Populist vision of McGovern included three particular fantasies. Each fantasy considered the persona of McGovern as a Populist hero, included a plot line involving Populist motives, and visualized villains in the Populist vein.

Three individual fantasies will be presented. First the Man of Principle fantasy will be presented as an example of McGovern's Neo-Populist identity. Next a New Politics fantasy will discuss the positions used by McGovern to project a Neo-Populist plot line. Finally, an examination of a Grass Roots fantasy will show how the Neo-Populist rhetoric cast itself on the political stage.[1]

The Man of Principle Fantasy Type

The first scenario emphasized in the campaign asscciated with the 1972 New Populist rhetorical vision focused on character. The importance of emphasizing character in the 1972 Democratic candidate was foreshadowed by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in early 1972. He argued,

> The Democratic nominee in 1972 must have several obvious qualities. One is that he must be a man who is perceived as telling the truth. . . . A second quality is an active concern for the state of our nation as a human community. . . . A third quality is an instinct for foreign policy. . . . The fourth essential quality for the Democratic nominee: he must be bold and forthright on policy. . . .[2]

In short, at least according to Schlesinger, important criteria for the nominee were a sense of public trust, human compassion, foreign policy wisdom and courageous forward programs. These characteristics tend to focus on the character of the candidate and stress personal qualities as important.

The stress on the personal character of a potential Democratic nomineee was a strong strain in the McGovern New Populist rhetorical vision. In a 1971 interview, McGovern said:

> I've recognized from the beginning that the principle assets I have as a candidate are my reputation and my record of being myself, of not trying to create some kind of manufactured position or image. I've tended over the years to speak out with considerable candor. I haven't backed away from any of the tough issues, even though they required paying a penalty. . . .[3]

Senator McGovern's statements often focused on the issue of trust in government. On "Face the Nation" McGovern remarked:

> Let's try to find out where our country went off the track. How did we get into a situation where 67 per cent of the American people said in a recent poll that they don't think this administration is telling them the truth. And the same people said a year ago that they didn't trust the previous administration. Now those are the kind of things that ought to concern us.[4]

In addition to McGovern's personal statements related to trust and secrecy in government, his rhetoricians created messages which portrayed McGovern as standing for honesty in government. McGovern spokesmen in The New Democrat argued, "Today it comes almost as a surprise when somebody speaks the truth. But everyone acknowledges McGovern's thing is his honesty--unfaltering and unique. . . ."[5] McGovern rhetoricians portrayed him as a man who on issue after issue has been honest with the American public. He is represented as a man who takes a stand on important issues and does not back away from that position.

Note the artristry with which the Man of Principle fantasy was presented by the McGovern rhetoricians. In a "McGovern on the Issues" statement on Vietnam a rich drama was presented in the rhetoric. FBI Director Hoover was portrayed in tragic terms as a falling hero who threatens to shake the very fiber of the nation. On Vietnam, Senator McGovern was visualized standing in the Senate in 1963 rejecting our Vietnam involvement in impassioned terms.[6] In these instances the rhetoric embodies a vividly developed fantasy theme. The themes dramatize the McGovern persona as a Man of Principle. In some instances the rhetoric employed what is called a fantasy type. Because the fantasy themes have been repeated so often in the rhetoric, the rhetoricians are able to allude to a number of past fantasy themes by describing in general terms the conclusion drawn from the various themes. Thus when

the McGovern rhetoricians argue that "for more than twenty years, George McGovern has advocated recognition of the government in Peking," they are appealing to the fantasy type that portrays McGovern as a Man of Principle who consistently spoke on issues according to his conscience. The success of the appeal seems predicated on the audience's willingness and ability to identify with past fantasy themes in a way sufficient to justify the fantasy type in their minds.

In regard to sensing the humane demands on the potential candidate, he suggested, "I think a sense of decency . . . will be essential in the next President."[7] He continued, "I also think I have a broader and more sensitive perspective than the other candidates on the really crucial problems . . . before the country."[8] McGovern rhetorician Peter Schrag observed that "McGovern is one of the few genuine moralists left in American public life."[9] McGovern's interview reflected the deep moral overtones of a sense of decency. He claimed to stand not for "prudishness or sanctimonious self-righteousness, but old-fashioned concern and love for others. . . ."[10] He claimed to be "deeply distressed over the mistaken directions we're pursuing. We're on the wrong course in the world and the problems we're neglecting here at home have become so acute that 1972 may be the last turnabout chance we'll have."[11]

McGovern rhetoricians frequently quoted Robert F. Kennedy's May 10, 1968, testimonial support of George McGovern:

> The fact is of all my colleagues in the United States Senate, the person who has the most feeling and does the things in the most genuine way, without that affecting his life, is George McGovern. He is the most decent man in the U.S. Senate. He is so highly admired by all his colleagues, not just for his ability but because of the kind of man that he is. That is truer of him than anyone else in the United States Senate.[12]

The McGovern rhetoricians claimed "McGovern is the only guy today who has the same authenticity and intensity which Robert Kennedy possessed."[13] The McGovern forces clearly portrayed McGovern as a persona who would not only displace secrecy and deceit in government but would also bring a new sense of human decency to the office of President. The McGovern rhetoricians often dramatized McGovern's leadership in the Food for Peace program as typical of McGovern's insight into human problems.[14]

The above support for the Man of Principle fantasy type advanced by the McGovern publicists does more than focus attention on the nature of the McGovern persona. The quotation from Robert Kennedy attempts to shape the direction of the identity. Not only is McGovern's persona developed but it is identified with a well known martyred persona. The testimonial summarizes the fantasy type well by depicting McGovern as an exceptionally decent man. The potential persuasiveness for Kennedy supporters of that type of fantasy theme is reinforced by the comparison of McGovern and Kennedy in the pro-McGovern rhetoric.

McGovern also alluded to an insight into foreign policy he claims to possess. As Schlesinger noted, the next president must possess "a sense of the way the world is moving, a grasp of international realities."[15] On Vietnam McGovern spoke strongly labeling the U.S. policy of "the devastation of Vietnam" as "a deliberate national policy that has the endorsement of the United States government, its commanders in the field, its Armed Services Committee in the Congress and the Joint Chiefs of Staff."[16] Eben more important Senator McGovern is often credited as the first senator to speak out against the Vietnam war. On September 24, 1963, in a general foreign policy address in the Senate, McGovern devoted a few paragraphs to the topic.[17]

In addition, in early 1969 McGovern delivered a speech entitled "Second American Revolution." Former State Department officer J. F. Richard remarked that the central

> . . . idea [of the speech] grew from his earlier theme--"Come home, America"--and was first fully developed in speeches he gave on three campuses in Pennsylvania and Ohio. He told his largely student audiences that their generation was no better or worse than those of past or future. The problems [in Vietnam] remained difficult with little prospect of quick or drastic solution. "In all my travels and studies, I have found no better solution than in the founding ideals of our country. Our best hope lies in the reaffirmation of those ideals in our policies and procedures. . . ."[18]

During November, 1969, Senator McGovern was the principal speaker at the Vietnam mobilization rally in Washington, D.C. In his address he argued, "We love America enough to call her to a higher standard. We love America enough to call her away from the folly of war to the blessings of peace."[19]

The McGovern rhetoric contained a number of fantasies which dramatized his record against the war. The McGovern for President committee's pamphlet "George McGovern. The kind of man he is . . ." quoted McGovern as saying:

> I still regard the war in Vietnam as the number one issue before the country. I was the first to oppose it, and my first presidential act would be to end it. As long as our soldiers and the people of Southeast Asia are dying over there, and as long as the bombing continues, I frankly don't mind being called a one-issue candidate.[20]

Another campaign pamphlet quoted McGovern as saying, "I'm fed up with tired old men dreaming up wars for young men to die in."[21] Still a third campaign pamphlet, "McGovern on the Issues," stated:

> George McGovern was the first United States Senator to speak out against the American military involvement in Vietnam, on September 24, 1963. His early and consistent opposition to American policy in

> Southeast Asia has made him the foremost leader of legislative efforts to set a specific date for the total withdrawal of all American forces from the Indochina War theater. For nearly a decade, George McGovern has been working to put an end to the killing so that we can begin to rebuild our troubled land.[22]

The Senator's rhetoricians portrayed the McGovern persona as the first in the Senate with the insight and courage to speak out on American foreign policy and the changing realities of the situation in Southeast Asia.

The McGovern Vietnam rhetoric offers additional insight into the strategies used by the McGovern forces to achieve identity. McGovern chose to achieve identity by often being the first or one of a few to speak out on an issue and the McGovern rhetoricians chose to emphasize this feature of the McGovern rhetoric. This approach might offer an unknown figure an opportunity to gain considerable media coverage because the controversial nature of the rhetoric generated in such situations makes it newsworthy. Such a strategy might prove counterproductive in the long run but in the short run it may be an effective rhetorical strategy for gaining an identity.

As for being bold and forthright on policy, McGovern claimed, "I was one of the first to speak out against such sacred cows as J. Edgar Hoover, and I'm going to continue such direct talk. . . ."[23] But in addition to claiming a tradition of taking bold stands, McGovern promised "to resolve every question on the basis of what is honest and then stay with that position."[24]

The pamphlet "McGovern on the Issues" listed 33 topics on which the Senator purportedly had had the courage to speak out.[25] An important component of the persuasion was the dramatization of the McGovern persona as one candidate with a record of speaking boldly and forthrightly on policy and often speaking first when such criticism was dangerous. Thus the McGovern

rhetorical vision portrayed him as a man who would remove secrecy from government, who possessed a humane sense of judgment, who had rare insight into foreign policy, who had a record of being the first to see the right way and who had the courage to speak out early.

The candidate's persuasion attributed motives to the McGovern persona which would likely be found admirable by those participating in a New Populist vision. Populists distrust the established political parties' procedures and personalities. While in South Dakota McGovern developed a reputation of working more as an individual persona than within an established party structure. As Anson noted, while he was organizing the party he tended to ignore the old party regulars and often when running he identified his persona as the "Courageous Prairie Statesman" rather than as the Democratic candidate. Even while chairman of the Democratic party reform committee he tended to put ideals ahead of party.[26] The Populist persona was a Man of Principle. For the old Populists such as Ignatius Donnelly, "the two old parties had become tools in the hands of the capitalist conspiracy and the professional politicians were unconcerned with the needs of the people."[27] For McGovern the two parties were in the hands of amoral politicians. "Tricky Dick" and archenemy Spiro controlled the "Grand Old Party," while the party of Roosevelt was in the hands of villains of the ilk of Daley, Johnson and Connally who put practical politics ahead of what was right. But the sense of what is right and just dictates McGovern's behavior. He possesses a propensity to view political struggles in moral terms. Moral questions demand moral men. Character controls moral situations because men of character make the correct moral decision. Thus the McGovern persuasion emphasizes character as important and values the persona of the good man with humane

judgment and foresight as illustrated by the persona's unselfish, highly moral stand on crucial issues like Vietnam. The persuasion suggests that the McGovern persona becomes the politician above politics.

The New Politics Fantasy Type

McGovern attempted to establish a New Politics fantasy type to provide himself with a rhetorical base separate from that of the other Democratic candidates.

"The McGovern movement, as sized up by codirector Gary Hart, is an outgrowth of the 1968 campaigns of Robert F. Kennedy and Eugene J. McCarthy."[28] As noted in the previous section the New Politics rhetorical tradition remained strong despite the failure to secure the nomination for Gene McCarthy in 1968. The New Politics tradition contained a symbolic political rhetoric onto which the McGovern New Politics fantasy type could graft and from which it could draw support. Emotionally it would evoke the "tremendous feeling--obvious throughout the country--in favor of movement, change and reform."[29] The people attracted to McGovern's New Politics fantasy themes seemed to include "suburban 'liberals,' pacifists, academics, women's liberationists, black power advocates, 'public service' lawyers, as well as the party's 'new left' faction."[30] As Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., noted:

> He [McGovern] seems to be strongest among the young. Conventions in New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and elsewhere show him by far the strongest among liberal activists: these endorsements confirm him as the heir of the Kennedy and McCarthy efforts, the New Politics of 1968.[31]

The critical dimension of the New Politics fantasy type manifested itself in McGovern's rhetorical efforts to stress standing for "real, profound change."[32] This section will examine the McGovern forces' rhetoric

and suggest that a series of rich fantasy themes emerged in the manifest content of the material. These fantasy themes focused on the American scene and dramatized a vivid picture of the nightmarish conditions which existed. Inherent in these fantasy themes were motives associated with McGovern's New Populist tradition. A second set of fantasy themes also emerged in the rhetoric that dramatized the scene in the future. These fantasies painted a utopian future which resulted from the reform he advocated. This composite of fantasy themes formed a mosaic of appeals which, taken together, can be considered McGovern's version of the American Dream. As Fisher noted:

> . . . those who voted for the Senator [McGovern] were not declaring their commitment to all of his positions on the major disputed questions of the campaign, including welfare, taxes, military spending, or even the war; they were registering their preference for that aspect of the American Dream that Senator McGovern's candidacy symbolized.[33]

Because the specific fantasy themes reflected in the McGovern dream reflected a deep desire for substantial change, those fantasy themes emerged into a New Politics fantasy type that came to symbolize McGovern's programs and policies. This fantasy type acted as a legitimatizing agent which appeared to transcend his prior New Populist appeals and the remnants of the New Politics of 1968.

The Nightmare

McGovern rhetoric depicted the nightmare of the present scene in terms of the Populist scenario. Because of their special privileges powerful forces were able to exploit the common man. In New Hampshire McGovern painted a rich fantasy theme that featured this scenario:

> Men who work in the factories of Manchester, or in the mills of Berlin, or who own a small business in Concord--if those men earn $6,000 to $8,000 a yeqr, they are paying higher taxes than men in Boston and New York, who earn more than $200,000 a year from buying and selling commodities they never see.[34]

McGovern rhetoricians tended to emphasize McGovern's sentiment in their material. In the pamphlet "George McGovern. The kind of man he is . . ." they quoted McGovern as saying:

> We need to reform our total tax structure. The ordinary citizen is now being asked to pay heavier taxes while many of the rich and powerful escape through loopholes--in some cases paying no taxes at all. Furthermore, we must reduce property taxes across the board. Excessive reliance on property taxes has made home ownership impossible for millions of families.[35]

The fantasy themes unfold with the common worker paying higher taxes than the rich and powerful, who are portrayed as paying little or "no taxes at all." The New Populist concern with and suspicion of wealth and power operated as a powerful motive. The "big corporations and wealthy" are singled out as those who do not pay their fair share because "special interest groups" have aided them in circumventing the law. McGovern rhetoricians reflect this suspicion in their rhetoric concerning small business. The emerging McGovern dream, then, depicts the status quo as a nightmare. Forces of power dominate the scene and repress the common man. Waste and corruption pervade many areas of society. In the case of defense, for example, McGovern argued, "there has to be a cut of 30 to 40 billion dollars in the military sector."[36]

McGovern depicted the defense empire as "an excessive, wasteful, overly large military establishment."[37] The McGovern fantasy themes visualized evil

forces in the military-industrial complex that worked for their own gain "at the expense of our vital economic and social health."[38]

These fantasy themes that emerged in the McGovern rhetoric painted the present scene as a dismal nightmare of powerful forces corrupting and destroying the principles of honesty and equity on which the American system purportedly is based.

The Dream

A second set of fantasy themes emerged in the rhetoric which addressed themselves to the issues of tax equity and military spending. These fantasy themes foreshadowed a better America that would emerge from some fundamental change. The McGovern dream for the future saw an America in which taxes were applied equitably:

> The most urgently needed change in our systems of taxation and public assistance is to place far greater emphasis on fairness. Each American should feel that he is getting his money's worth and that he is being treated exactly like every other American. Each American should pay his fair share and each American should receive his fair share. That is clearly not the case now.[39]

The dream tended to emphasize McGovern as standing for reform that would require each citizen to pay his fair share: "Senator George McGovern proposes a broad new program of tax reform, closing the loopholes that allow the wealthy to escape paying their fair share."[40] McGovern himself is reported to suggest:

> It is time for American industry and special interest groups to assume more of the nation's tax burden. And it is time to relieve the average family of the high taxes he must pay, and of the inflation which cuts so cruelly into the income of the poor, the middle class, and the elderly.[41]

According to "McGovern on the Issues" McGovern's welfare reform proposal included:

> A broad program of tax and welfare reform, coupled with a proposal for a "redistribution of income" which could bring as much as $92 billion in additional revenue to the treasury . . . and provide every American with a guaranteed annual income "to replace the welfare mess." While this Income Redistribution Plan could replace welfare, middle income taxpayers ($4,000 to $12,000) would be eligible to receive from the federal government an income supplement. The proposal is not limited to any single formula. The annual payment might be as much as $1,000 per person or $4,000 for a family of four.[42]

The McGovern dream for the future saw an America in which the elimination of waste and corruption in the military would provide the resources to better conditions at home. McGovern rhetoricians quoted McGovern as advocating defense cuts.

> The first thing we need to provide jobs is the money and that is easy to find. End the war, cut our troops in Europe by half as Senator Mansfield proposed, do away with unnecessary and unworkable military gadgets like the ABM. . . .
>
> Do all of the things I mention and there is immediately some $30 or $40 billion that can then be invested in the kind of work we need here at home without damaging the defense of the nation.[43]

The McGovern rhetoric portrayed a dream of a society which would "provide the country with a realistic defense while financing our unfinished business at home."[44]

On other issues the McGovern dream of a new American life emerged. On racism McGovern rhetoricians said "All Americans must have equal rights--the right to secure a decent home, a good job, a quality education."[45] They quoted McGovern as saying, "The most urgent moral priority in America today is to end the curse of racism in all its ugly forms."[46] On the environment McGovern stated:

> Our nation, which has led the world into a new era of technological development, may also be leading the world into ruin. We're not going to have another chance at replacing our natural resources once they're destroyed. We must use all the powers of government and personal commitment to stop this terrible assault on our environment.[47]

Again the McGovern rhetoric foreshadowed a dream of better use of government policy to preserve our environment.

Thus the McGovern forces' rhetoric in many ways appealed to an old traditional rhetorical vision in America that has reached almost mythic proportions; that vision is often called the American Dream. Reflecting the motives of a New Populist, the McGovern rhetoric visualized elimination of special privilege and exemption for the powerful at the expense of the common man. The McGovern income redistribution plan projected a "break-even income for a family of four . . . at $12,000.[48] This formula supported the belief reflected in the McGovern rhetoric that about 20% of the taxpayers (the rich 20%) would experience tax increases while the remaining 80% (the common men) would reap the benefits of the plan. This dream of America reflected a strong New Populist perspective.

The McGovern fantasy themes which portrayed the nightmare of today and the dream of tomorrow emerged into a McGovern New Politics fantasy type which came to symbolize McGovern's commitment to real profound change.

Powerful scenarios are depicted in which overwhelming forces operate against the common man. This reflects the merger of the past New Populist rhetorical tradition of McGovern with the New Politics tradition of 1968 into a new and powerful New Politics fantasy type. The McGovern rhetoric attempts to harness the Populist motives to the great sense of change and social concern

Inherent in the New Politics of 1968. In this respect the New Politics fantasy type symbolized the legitimacy of McGovern's candidacy. He was portrayed as standing for programs and policies rooted in Gene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy. He emerged as a symbol which transcended both the New Politics of 1968 and the New Populist persona of South Dakota.

The Grass Roots Fantasy Type

A third fantasy type in the New Populist rhetorical vision portrays a drama in which grass roots support for McGovern grows until he overcomes the political machines. Critically, once McGovern established a national identity and the forces of the New Politics rallied behind him, the vision encouraged its participants to dream that grass roots support would once again enable them to overcome the established political machine and make McGovern the candidate of the people. To this end a huge cast of support players was assembled designed to organize and coordinate the spontaneous surge of support for McGovern. The fantasy themes suggested a marriage of the 1968 New Politics forces of Kennedy and McCarthy into one viable political force. Time, for example, fantasized during the Wisconsin primary:

> McGovern . . . forged a coalition of followers from both camps. On one flank are such "Kennedy men" as advisers John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., former Kennedy Press Secretaries Pierre Salinger and Frank Mahkiewicz, writers Richard Goodwin and Adam Walinsky. . . . On the other are legions of young staffers and student volunteers bristling with go-for-George enthusiasm. The spectacle of the old Kennedy pros followed by McGovern's young crusaders, says Eugene McCarthy, "is like German officers leading Irish troops."[49]

The Grass Roots scenario combined the vision of the New Politics and its growing power base with the growing support for McGovern. As U.S. News and World Report observed, "reports from around the country indicate that a

political revolution is going on at the grass roots in the Democratic Party."[50] This revolution, combined with a unique coalition of factions, provided the McGovern vision with a viable cast of characters who supported the persona in his campaign.

Rhetoric generated by the McGovern forces tended to dramatize the successes of the campaign. In Minnesota, for example, the McGovern forces interpreted his success as a victory over Hubert Humphrey:

> Supporters of George McGovern and the Liberal Coalition made a surprisingly strong showing in Minnesota's recent precinct caucuses. The Coalition won a majority or plurality of the delegates in at least four of Minnesota's eight congressional districts, and political observers said that Hubert Humphrey would have to fight just to get 50% in his home state.[51]

In a national newsletter the McGovern forces observed,

> Senator McGovern's campaign for the Presidency continued to gain momentum and strength during the month of May. Primary victories in Nebraska, Oregon and Rhode Island, and strong showings in Ohio and Michigan increased our lead in the delegate race, and gave solid evidence that the new coalition of McGovern supporters can carry the Senator to victory at the Democratic convention and in the November election.[52]

Campaign literature attempted to portray McGovern's successes in terms of his grass roots support in the various states. One pamphlet argued "McGovern's delegate strength builds in caucus states."[53] It suggested that in Idaho, North Dakota, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Colorado, Vermont, Virginia and Iowa local backers were "blitzing" toward victory. The pamphlet described the McGovern workers in such terms as "snowballing to victory," showing "initial strength," "blitzing," making "impressive showings," making the "McGovern muscle felt," operating "in firm control," and other terms which suggested that McGovern was "exploiting a surprisingly

strong grass-roots organization. . . ."[54]

But even more important the public rhetoric began to attribute the McGovern forces' success to their grass roots system. The public rhetoric presented a dramatization of the Wisconsin primary in which McGovern the hero saved the party "from the embarrassment of another Wallace victory." [55] In that race McGovern was able to "communicate just enough of his personal concern, bolster it with carefully conceived tax reforms, farm policy, cuts in defense spending to sweep seven of nine Wisconsin districts in the state and pick up just under 30 percent of the Democratic vote."[56] Clearly the Populist traditions and the New Politics ideology played a part but at the same time the hero focused on the issues. The supporting characters were "well organized in the state from the start, that much was well known."[57] "To key McGovern aides, men like Frank Mankiewicz . . . organization is the key to a primary win."[58] And in Wisconsin McGovern forces were clearly organized.

But organization among the supporting actors is not sufficient. Commitment is also necessary. As Paul R. Wieck observed, "McGovern's hopes lie in the depth of commitment of his supporters. . . . From what I've seen their commitment and energy match his own and bring to mind the warning of Wisconsin's Don Peterson. . . .'Everybody always underestimates George. Don't make that mistake.'" [59] As Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., noted, McGovern "has the best grass-roots organization in the current campaign."[60]

The Unfolding Scenario

McGovern's Grass Roots scenario provided a vivid drama which was portrayed often in the public rhetoric. Early in the campaign McGovern was portrayed as facing a tremendous uphill struggle. In March, 1972, Time

published a special election supplement. It reported that Muskie was the clear leader in 16 primary states (California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Wisconsin). Time suggested that McGovern was leading only in his home state, South Dakota. In the convention states Muskie was reported to be ahead in 20 states (Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands). McGovern was not credited with being ahead in any convention state. Time concluded that for "Edmund Muskie, the leader, the name of the game is momentum."[61]

Yet the Time analysis failed to recognize the power of organization and commitment. It failed to account for a shift in momentum and the fact that the scenario of the McGovern vision would be played out in state after state during the next few months. For example, after the McGovern Wisconsin victory, he received "a much needed boost to his underdog campaign. It [the victory] certified him as a vote getter with far broader appeal than he was given credit for. It unlocked fresh supplies of McGovern money."[62] As the scenario began to play out in fact it corroborated the McGovern rhetoric and made it more consuming.

Early signs of McGovern's grass roots power manifested themselves in the Arizona and Iowa caucuses. "Iowa's Democratic caucus gave him 23% of the vote and . . . Arizona's awarded him 20% of the delegate slots. Neither outcome was enough to lead the crowded field, but the figures were more than four times the 3% to 5% share of voters the pollsters normally

consign to him."[63] Once the Wisconsin primary victory ignited the grass roots support reports were concluding, "In state after state, young political activists are taking over party caucuses and choosing the national convention delegates, in a concerted effort to nominate Senator George S. McGovern. . . ."[64] Articles in the national press tended to portray the grass roots supporters in dramatic terms. Called in an article "the army of ants" and the "flying squad"[65] McGovern's workers are depicted as taking "a lesson from McGovern's lifelong political passion for collecting the names of supporters, they move in droves from state to state, classifying voters in 3 in. by 5 in. cards. . . ."[66] They are referred to as "quietly tilling the vineyards in the nonprimary states, sneaking up on the courthouse pros to capture 7 delegates in Vermont, 8 in Idaho, 13 in Iowa, 9 in Arizona."[67]

The Grass Roots power personified the impossible. Reports chaining out in the press suggested:

> The capping of all this effort should come early next month in California where Campaign Manager Hart plans to do what most politicians say is impossible: organize the heterogeneous state from the ground up. California is so big that the conventional political wisdom dictates campaigning it through the media. But McGovern operatives disagree. By primary time they aim to have at least 1,000 out-of-state volunteers working with 25,000 to 50,000 Californians, organizing the state New Hampshire style--except that in the case of California that means calling in person or by telephone on nearly 2,000,000 Democratic households.[68]

Clearly the Grass Roots scenario portrays the supporters of McGovern much in his own persona. McGovern does the impossible--he organizes the Democratic party in South Dakota--his supporting characters organize "the impossible" campaign in his image and likeness on the national level.

McGovern tends to campaign "at close range" rather than marketing his product on electronic media; his supporters launch a face to face campaign South Dakota style.[69] Whereas in South Dakota McGovern was the organizational tycoon, on the national level stand-in actors like Gary Hart and Frank Mankiewicz played that role. While McGovern is personified as "confident despite the many Democratic leaders who still dismiss his candidacy,"[70] his grass roots supporters inspire confidence.

Since the bulk of the grass roots supporters came from the 1968 Kennedy-McCarthy legacy, it is not surprising that their motives reflected the same concerns. The villains they visualized included the Johnsonian element in the party and its old foreign policy. Often the party regulars personified the villains for them. Reports also emerged that dramatized the struggle between the grass roots supporters and the Democratic party itself.

> Commented one disgruntled Democrat: "We have substituted mob rule for boss rule." He contends that the weighted caucuses do not reflect the views of the mass of working-class, middle-aged Democrats who vote in general elections.[71]

U.S. News and World Report provided a summary of the grass roots activity and the bold pros" reaction to it in several states. The scenarios portrayed dramas of intense conflict in many cases. In Vermont it was reported that,

> . . . [the] convention was dominated by a well-organized crew of youthful supporters of the antiwar South Dakotan.
>
> They adopted by an overwhelming majority an antiwar resolution that called for immediate withdrawal from Vietnam, and another to grant amnesty for all draft evaders, deserters and those convicted of "war crimes."
>
> Other resolutions approved urged legislation of the use of marijuana, strong birth control lesislation, and removing . . . controls from abortions.[72]

On a broader level, however, the Grass Roots fantasy type relived the Populist struggle central to McGovern's career. The traditional Populist vision with its distrust of established political parties and fear of organized power provided strong motives for participants in the rhetoric to look for a new base of political power. The New Politics of 1968's experience was interpreted as proving that the party of Johnson, Daley and Humphrey was not the party of the people. In the vision of the blacks, chicanos, students, young people and others who saw themselves as kept out of the 1968 Democratic convention by barbed wire and bayonets, there was little reason to trust the party in 1972.' The Grass Roots scenario offered the New Politics participants a way to disassociate themselves from the corrupt power of the party much as the Populists disassociated themselves from the bankers by starting a new "People's Party."

Footnotes

[1]For a complete development of the entire thesis of this paper, see William D. Semlak, a Rhetorical Analysis of George S. McGovern's campaign for the 1972 Democratic Presidential Nomination, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1973

[2]Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Case for George McGovern," New Republic, February 26, 1972, 15-16

[3]McGovern for President Committee reprint of Milton Viorst, "Playboy Interview: George McGovern," Playboy, August, 1971, phamphlet

[4]"Face the Nation," CBS, June 20, 1971, reprinted in Congressional Record, June 21, 1971, 21179.

[5]The New Democrat, April, 1972, 2.

[6]McGovern for President Committee, "McGovern on the Issues," 1972, cover.

[7]"Playboy Interview."

[8]Ibid

[9]Atlantic, October, 1971, 21.

[10]"Playboy Interview."

[11]Ibid.

[12]McGovern for President Committee, "Work with McGovern," campaign pamphlet.

[13]The New Democrat, April, 1972, 2.

[14]See "McGovern on the Issues" and "Work with McGovern."

[15]Schlesinger, New Republic, February 26, 1972, 26.

[16]"Playboy Interview."

[17]George McGovern, Congressional Record, September 24, 1963, 17884. It is also important to note that this speech was given while McGovern's friend John Kennedy was still president. This is referred to by McGovern rhetoricians as further proof that McGovern is a Man of Principle who speaks out for what he believes even though it may not be popular with his friends.

[18]Richard, "Let George Do It," Commonweal, March 12, 1971 12.

[19]George McGovern, "The America We Seek," Congressional Record, November 24, 1969, 35418.

[20]McGovern for President Committee, "George McGovern. The kind of man he is . . . ," campaign pamphlet.

[21]McGovern for President Committee, "Vote George," campaign pamphlet.

[22]"McGovern on the Issues."

[23]"Playboy Interview."

[24]Ibid.

[25]The issues were agriculture, American labor, China, conservation, the constitution, crime and justice, defense, the draft, drugs, economic conversion, economy, education, womens rights, F.B.I., foreign aid, health, native Americans, Indochina war, the Middle East, nuclear weapons, nutrition, patriotism, political reform, POWS, minority group rights, rural development, science, senior citizens, taxation, the U.S. role in the world, veterans and welfare reform.

[26]Robert Sam Anson, McGovern: A Biography (New York: HoH, Rinhart and Winston, 1972, 1972), 24.

[27]David W. Noble, The Progressive Mind: 1890 - 1917 (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971), 8.

[28]"The 'McGovern Phenomenon'--And How It Grew," U.S. News and World Report, June 12, 1972, 29.

[29]James MacGregor Burns, U.S. News and World Report, July 31, 1972, 48.

[30]U.S. News and World Report, June 12, 1972, 29.

[31]New Republic, February 26, 1972, 17.

[32]"Playboy Interview."

[33]Walter R. Fisher, "Reaffirmation and Subversion of the American Dream," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 59 (April 1973), 160

[34]McGovern for President Committee, "McGovern on Tax Reform," campaign pamphlet.

[35]McGovern for President Committee, "George McGovern. The kind of man he is . . . ," campaign pamphlet.

[36]"Playboy Interview."

[37]McGovern for President Committee, "McGovern on the Issues."

[38]Ibid.

[39]McGovern for President Committee reprint of remarks of George S. McGovern, Congressional Record, April 7, 1972, campaign pamphlet.

[40]"McGovern on Tax Reform."

[41]"George McGovern. The kind of man he is . . . "

[42]"McGovern on the Issues."

[43]McGovern for President Committee, "George McGovern Blasts Nixon's Economic Plan," campaign pamphlet.

[44]McGovern for President Committee, "George McGovern's New Look at the Military," campaign pamphlet.

[45]McGovern for President Committee, "McGovern and Black Americans," campaign pamphlet.

[46]Ibid.

[47]"George McGovern. The kind of man he is . . . "

[48]Congressional Record reprint, April 7, 1972.

[49]"Success at Last for George," Time, April 17, 1972, 19.

[50]U.S. News and World Report, June 12, 1972, 29.

[51]Minnesotans for McGovern, February/March, 1972, 29.

[52]McGovern for President Newsletter, June, 1972, 1.

[53]McGovern for President Committee, "Behind the Primary Headlines . . . ," campaign pamphlet.

[54]Ibid

[55]"George Does It," New Republic, April 15, 1972, 10.

[56]Ibid., 10

[57]"Now a Three-way Race," Newsweek, April 17, 1972, 22.

[58]"McGovern Campaign," New Republic, October 30, 1971, 16.

[59]Ibid., 20.

[60]Schlesinger, New Republic, February 26, 1972, 17.

[61]See special Time pull-out supplement, Time, March 6, 1972.

[62]Newsweek, April 17, 1972, 22.

[63]"McGovern on the Issues," Time, February 14, 1972, 11.

[64]U.S. News and World Report, June 12, 1972, 29.

[65]Time, May 8, 1972, 21.

[66]Ibid., 21.

[67]Ibid., 22

[68]Ibid., 22.

[69]New Republic, October 30, 1971, 15.

[70]Time, April 17, 1972, 20.

[71]U.S. News and World Report, June 12, 1972, 30.

[72]Ibid., 30.